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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [NATO](#) [GM](#) [RS](#) [UP](#) [GG](#)  
SUBJECT: GETTING GERMANY ON BOARD FOR MAP FOR GEORGIA AND  
UKRAINE

REF: STATE 55247

Classified By: DCM JOHN KOENIG. REASONS: 1.4 (B) AND (D).

11. (C) SUMMARY. We will have to engage regularly with the German government at very senior levels over the next several months to have any hope of getting the Germans on board with extending MAP to Georgia and Ukraine at the NATO foreign ministers meeting in December. The German "nein" at Bucharest came from the Chancellor herself and she has shown little indication of flexibility on this point since then. While it is tempting to attribute Germany's position on MAP to a feckless concern for Russian sensitivities, Merkel and her senior advisers seem to have some genuine reservations about the Georgian and Ukrainian candidacies, which we should take seriously and attempt to address as outlined in reftel. We should encourage the Ukrainians and Georgians to do so for their part as well. Visits by Saakashvili to Berlin in late June and by Merkel to Kyiv in July will be key milestones. There is a widespread suspicion among German policymakers that our push for a MAP decision in December is not based on the merits, but really is about creating a legacy for the Bush Administration. While the Germans may prove hopelessly dug in against MAP, we may be able to move them in the right direction by engaging them early and demonstrating that MAP is part of a coherent strategic approach that will leverage and anchor reform in both countries, and that it is consistent with our vision of strategy toward Russia in the Medvedev era. END SUMMARY.

Not Backing Down

12. (C) Germany may very well prove to be the most difficult nut to crack in forging an Allied consensus on extending the membership action plan (MAP) to Georgia and Ukraine. The German position on MAP at Bucharest was set by Chancellor Merkel herself, who continues to conflate actual membership and MAP as one and the same. German officials tell us that part of the German reluctance on MAP springs from a fear that, as soon as MAP is granted, the U.S. will push immediately for offers of membership. The Germans therefore have moved the goal posts on what they think is required to join MAP. As regrettable as that is, Merkel has demonstrated that she is ready to withstand considerable pressure. Since the summit, she has shown little indication of backing down from her view that Georgia, because of a democratic deficit and separatist conflicts, and Ukraine, because of the uncertain public support for NATO membership, are simply not ready to join MAP and may not be for some time to come. It is also important to note that the Chancellor enjoys almost unanimous political support within Germany for this approach. There is no domestic constituency pushing MAP for Georgia and Ukraine. A few CDU politicians, like foreign policy spokesmen Eckhart Von Klaeden, support bringing Georgia and

Ukraine into Euro-Atlantic structures, but they are not very active or outspoken on the matter.

#### Slow rolling MAP

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13. (C) Senior Chancellery and Foreign Office figures ignore the contradiction between the cautious German position and the very forward-leaning wording in the Bucharest Declaration, which flatly states that Georgia and Ukraine "will become members of NATO." They point to the Bucharest Declaration's mention of a "first assessment" by foreign ministers in December as clearly suggesting that other assessments will have to follow before MAP status is granted.

While not completely ruling out a favorable MAP decision in December, they clearly see it as extremely unlikely; some German officials are willing to speculate privately that Georgia and Ukraine might overcome the outstanding questions and join MAP in 2010, but none have named an earlier date as a possibility. Deputy National Security Adviser Rolf Nikel, in an off-the-record discussion late in May at which POL M/C was present, said that Germany would not make a decision as serious as MAP "based on anyone's legacy." We have raised the bipartisan support for MAP in the Congress, but Nikel and other senior officials have expressed only skepticism about whether it would truly be a high-priority issue for the next administration. (In particular, German officials question whether Senator Obama, if elected, would pursue the NATO relationship with Ukraine and Georgia as energetically as they anticipate a McCain administration would.)

#### More Than Just Russia

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14. (C) It is tempting to attribute Germany's position on MAP to an overwrought desire to avoid doing anything that might upset or provoke the Russians. German foreign policy is certainly predicated on building a strong working relationship with Moscow, as demonstrated by the fact that Merkel was the first foreign leader to travel to Moscow to meet President Medvedev after his election in March. The Chancellor made increasing NATO-Russia cooperation a key part of her keynote address to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly last week, calling in particular for more frequent NATO-Russia meetings at the Head of State/Government level. But while there is certainly an element of kowtowing in the German position, the Chancellor's reluctance on MAP for Georgia and Ukraine goes beyond simply trying to curry favor with the Russians. Merkel herself has been fairly outspoken in criticizing Russia's respect for human rights and the rule of law, despite the fact that this has not endeared her to the Kremlin. German officials have gone out of their way to emphasize that non-NATO states, including Russia, cannot be given droit de regard over who can and cannot join the Alliance. Merkel seems to have genuine reservations about MAP for Georgia and Ukraine, aside from the likely negative Russian reaction, which we should take seriously and attempt to address.

#### Are the Georgians Using NATO as Bargaining Chip?

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15. (C) In the case of Georgia, the problem is a fundamental lack of trust in Saakashvili and his commitment to democracy and a peaceful resolution of the separatist conflicts. The suspicion of Saakashvili is deep-seated, as Merkel's senior advisers tell us repeatedly. With respect to MAP, Germans doubt whether Saakashvili is genuinely interested in NATO membership, or if Georgia simply is using relations with NATO as a bargaining chip to deal with Moscow over Abkhazia and South Ossetia. A senior Georgian official recently visited Berlin and reportedly told Deputy NSA Nikel that, if forced to choose between NATO membership and the restoration of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, the Georgians would choose the latter. Germans interpret this to mean that Tbilisi is interested in NATO only to achieve a resolution of other conflicts, not because Georgia shares NATO's values and strategic goals.

¶16. (C) Although we have emphasized to German officials that MAP does not entail any security commitments nor guarantee an eventual invitation to join, there is widespread concern that Saakashvili, once in MAP or as a NATO member, could draw the Alliance into a conflict with Russia (in which, as Nikel put it, "Tbilisi might not be totally blameless."). In the longer term, German MOD Officials are concerned that an Article 5 commitment to Georgia, given its geographic isolation, would be very difficult to fulfill and could undermine the credibility of the Alliance. Senior Foreign Office contacts claim that other NATO members -- especially the Balts -- share this fear. We should work with the Balts to correct the Germans' impression.

¶17. (C) Finally, there appears to be a cultural component underlying the German reluctance on Georgia, related to its geographic isolation from the rest of Europe. Some Germans do not see the south Caucasus as really part of Europe and are therefore not convinced these countries should be brought into Euro-Atlantic structures.

Ukraine: Do They Really Want It?

¶18. (C) We understand that while Merkel was fairly hard over in opposing MAP for Georgia before the Bucharest Summit, she was slightly more open to MAP for Ukraine. But Deputy NSA Nikel told visiting EUR DAS David Merkel June 4 that Ukraine is actually a far more difficult case for MAP and eventual NATO membership than Georgia given Ukraine's long and close association with Russia, dating back to Vladimir of Kyiv in ¶1988. Nikel argued that many Russians still see Ukraine as inexorably intertwined with Russia, which obviously complicates the NATO question.

¶19. (C) Partly because of these historical ties, the Germans remain skeptical that a stable and sizable majority can be forged in Ukraine any time soon in favor NATO membership. While PM Tymoshenko co-signed the "letter of the three" to NATO requesting MAP, she conceded later in a German newspaper interview that "as a private citizen," she might not vote in favor of joining the Alliance. The impression left by Tymoshenko's perceived waffling is substantial. The Chancellery and Foreign Office are concerned that granting MAP too soon, before there is a consensus in favor, could prove destabilizing and split the country between the pro-Russian east and the relatively more pro-NATO west. The Foreign Office NATO experts tell their superiors that Ukraine's performance on its Annual Target Plan has been unconvincing. More generally, German officials also have concerns about the penetration by Russia of the Ukrainian security and defense establishments, suggesting that this could undermine NATO. Again, the Germans argue that this is a good reason to wait before going forward with MAP.

Comment

¶10. (C) Germans at high levels have convinced themselves that MAP for Ukraine and Georgia is part of a U.S.-driven rush to membership based on short-term considerations, divorced from performance standards, that could weaken NATO -- bringing little (or negative) benefit while simultaneously complicating relations with Russia. Our hopes of reversing this position in time for a decision in December by NATO foreign ministers rest on engaging early (beginning as early as the summer) and at a senior level to dispel these notions -- before the Chancellor boxes Germany in publicly again, as she tends to do when she senses pressure. The more insight we can share into U.S. thinking about the pace and trajectory of progress from MAP to membership, the better we may be able to alter German views.

¶11. (C) The aspirants themselves (as well as other supporters within NATO) have key roles to play in moving German opinion. The Ukrainians (especially Tymoshenko, not just Yushchenko and Yatsenyuk) would need to deliver consistent messages

about their commitment to a strategic anchoring in the West, demonstrate progress on reforms, talk up their high-level dialogue with Russia, and dispel the Germans' impression that NATO risks becoming the ball in a Ukrainian domestic political sport whose rules the West only vaguely understands. The Georgians would make the best impression in Berlin by focusing on their commitment to NATO as part of a Euro-Atlantic vocation, rather than as a tool in settling the separatist conflicts. Tbilisi would have to continue stressing its commitment to peaceful resolution and outline ambitious goals for strengthening domestic democratic political institutions.

¶12. (C) Equally important will be intensified USG discussion with Germany of Russia. While the Germans accept the principle that no third country should have a veto over NATO's decision-making, they point out that both post-Cold War rounds of enlargement have been accompanied by a closer NATO-Russia relationship (i.e., creation of the Permanent Joint Council in 1997 and its upgrade to the NATO-Russia Council in 2002), suggesting that further thinking along these lines might counteract Russian objections or at least calm German fears. German policymakers, who say they are focused on managing the Medvedev-era agenda to reinforce the least negative tendencies in Moscow, seek reassurance that our approach to Ukraine and Georgia is embedded in a strategic vision that optimizes our influence on Russia and reinforces a shared understanding of how we would confront the anticipated negative Russian reaction. Our willingness to put the relationship with Georgia and Ukraine in this larger context will make it harder for the Germans, in the end, to keep stiff-arming the Georgians and Ukrainians on MAP without looking like they are simply kowtowing to Moscow.

TIMKEN JR